

Remarks by Josefina G. Carbonell
Assistant Secretary for Aging
2005 White House Conference on Aging

Welcome to the 2005 White House Conference on Aging!

I would like to begin --- by acknowledging the Conference Committees and staff --- for their leadership and hard work in making this conference a reality.

I welcome --- our distinguished members of the Cabinet, elected officials and guests --- our delegates and observers --- and our international colleagues.

Thank you for participating in this conference.

We applaud your interest in the future of aging.

I also want to pay special tribute --- to those of you who serve elderly people every day --- and express my personal gratitude -- for your dedication and service to older Americans.

Today represents the culmination of thousands of hours of work --- that has taken place over the last 15 months --- and reflects the input --- of tens of thousands of people all across our nation.

As the first White House Conference on Aging

in the 21st Century --- we have been given an opportunity to shape the future.

We are being summoned by the unique times we live in.

We are on the threshold of a world --- that will be very different than the one we have lived in.

We are witnessing --- first hand --- one of the most fundamental demographic shifts in human history.

In just 20 days --- the first wave of the baby boom will begin to turn 60. And --- long-term living --- is now a reality.

At the same time --- we are seeing advances in science and technology that are transforming the way we live our lives --- conduct our business --- and experience the world around us --- including the way we interact and communicate with one another.

And we are seeing fundamental changes in the way we think about --- and deliver --- health and long-term care.

These are exciting times --- historic times.

Major initiatives and opportunities are underway that hold the promise to modernize and improve the future of aging and transform the world around us.

Over the next two days --- we will be developing strategies to help our nation transition to **that** future.

Our strategies must involve every sector of society.

- every level of government
- every business sector
- every community, and yes,
- every individual.

Each generation has an opportunity --- to leave its mark on the world.

Today --- it is **our** turn.

The future of aging can not be defined as a matter of chance.

It is --- a matter of **choice**.

Introduction of Secretary Mike Leavitt

Now, it is my distinct honor to introduce to you my boss, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, **Mike Leavitt**.

He comes to the department with extensive experience in efficient management and in addressing the most significant health and human services challenges.

- As a former Governor of the state of Utah, the former EPA Administrator, a businessman, and a dedicated family man, he brings a seasoned experience, compassion and values, and a commitment to developing collaborative solutions to the Department of Health and Human Services.
- The right man to lead the Department that touches the lives of every American man, woman, child and elder.

With the vast responsibilities he has leading the largest civilian department in government, he is not only a man who **HAS** a mission, but is also a man **ON** a mission.

For instance, he has redefined “bus tours” in this country, with more than 50 Medicare tour stops since the end of June – stops like...

- **Las Vegas, Nevada**, where he sang with a **barbershop quartet**; and
- **Cincinnati, Ohio**, where he ate a bowl of the famous **Skyline Chili**; –
- In fact, he even did a little salsa dancing at **Little Havana Centers** in **Miami, Florida**.

Yes – he is a man on a mission.

And let me attest to how “**effective**” he is.

- He charged all of us to go home over the Thanksgiving holidays and help enroll family members in the new Medicare Prescription Drug benefit.
- And I understand that he did the same thing,
 - The result –
 - I hear that Dixie and Ann Leavitt will be saving about \$5,000 a year.

I'd say -- you did pretty good, Mr. Secretary.

Mike Leavitt is a dedicated public servant who is **clearly committed** to the **mission** given to him by the President –

- to help Americans **live longer, healthier, and better lives**, and
- to **do it in a way** that **protects** our **economic competitiveness** as a nation.

Please join me in welcoming to the stage, the Honorable Mike Leavitt.